

Maurice Leblanc

Arsene Lupin

The Gentleman Burglar



Translator: Nicolae Sfetcu

MultiMedia Publishing

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BOOK PREVIEW

The Arrest of Arsène Lupin

A strange trip! It started so well though, under happiest auspices. *Provence* is a fast, comfortable transatlantic, controlled by the most affable men. The most select society was there. Relationships are formed, entertainment were organized. We had the pleasant sensation of being separated from the world, reduced to ourselves as on an unknown island, forced therefore to get closer to each other.

And we got closer ...

Have you ever thought about what is original and unexpected in this group of beings that the day before did not know each other, and who, for a few days between the infinite sky and the huge sea, will live in the most intimate life, together will challenge the wrath of the ocean, the terrifying onslaught of waves, the wickedness of the storms and the sneaky quiet of the sleepy water?

This is, after all, lived in a kind of tragic shortcut, life itself, with its storms and its grandeurs, its monotony and diversity, and that is why, perhaps, we taste with feverish haste and pleasure more intense this short journey that we see the end just when it starts.

But, for several years, something happens which greatly adds to the emotions of the crossing. The little floating island is still dependent on this world which we thought we were freed. A link exists, which unravels gradually only in open ocean, and gradually, in open ocean, it starts again. The wireless telegraph! Call from another universe from which we receive news in the most mysterious way ever! Imagination has no resource to evoke the hollow iron wires inside which slips the invisible message. The mystery is still unfathomable, more poetic, too, and it is the wings of the wind that we must turn to explain this new miracle.

Thus, the first few hours, we felt we followed, escorted, preceded even by that distant voice, which from time to time, whispered to one of us a few words there. Two friends spoke to me. Ten others, twenty others sent us all through space, their smiling or sad farewells.

But the second day, at five hundred miles from the French coast, during a thunderstorm afternoon, the wireless telegraph transmitted us a telegram which reads:

"Arsène Lupin to your board, first class, blonde hair, wound on the right forearm, traveling alone under the name of R ..."

At that moment, a violent thunderclap burst in the dark sky. The electric waves were interrupted. The rest of the mail failed. The name under which Arsène Lupin was hiding, we know the initial only.

If it had been any other news, I have no doubt that the secret would have been carefully guarded by employees of the telegraph office, as well as the purser and the captain. But there are this kind of events that seem to force the strictest discretion. The same day, no one could say how the thing had been rumored, we all knew that the famous Arsène Lupin was hiding among us.

Arsène Lupin in our midst! The elusive burglar that are telling prowess in all the newspapers for months! The enigmatic character with which the old Ganimard, our best policeman, had hired this duel to the death with the events took place so picturesque! Arsène Lupin, the gentleman visionary that operates only in the castles and salons only, and one night when he had entered at the Baron Schormann, had left empty-handed and left his card, adorned with this formula: "Arsène Lupin, Gentleman Burglar, will return when the furniture will be authentic." Arsène Lupin, the man of a thousand disguises: by turns driver, tenor, bookmaker, family son, teen, old man, Marseille bagman, Russian doctor, Spanish bullfighter!

Let us make well aware of this: Arsène Lupin coming and going in the relatively limited space of a transatlantic, what I say! in this little corner of the world where he found himself at all times, in this dining room, in this salon, in this smoker! Arsène Lupin was perhaps this gentleman ... or this one ... my table neighbor ... my cabin mate ...

- And it will last five days twenty-four hours a day! exclaimed Miss Nelly Underdown the next day, but this is intolerable! I hope he will be arrested.

And turning to me:

- Monsieur Andrezy, you are already in better terms with the captain, you know nothing?

I would have liked to know something to please Miss Nelly! It was one of these magnificent creatures, wherever they are, as soon occupy the most space in sight. Their beauty as much as their fortune dazzles. They have a courtyard, fervents, enthusiasts.

Raised in Paris by a French mother, she joined her father, the millionaire Underdown from Chicago. One of her friends, Lady Jerland, accompanied him.

From the first hour, I started flirting. But in the rapid intimacy of the voyage, his charm had disturbed me immediately, and I felt a little too excited to flirt when her big black eyes met mine. However she welcomed my homage with some favor. She deigned to laugh at my jokes and to be interested in my anecdotes. A wave of sympathy seemed to respond to the eagerness I showed him.

A single rival may have worried me, quite handsome, elegant, reserved, she sometimes seemed to prefer his taciturn mood to my more "outside" Parisien ways.

He belongs to the group of admirers that surrounded Miss Nelly, when she questioned me. We were on deck, comfortably installed in rocking chairs. The storm of the day before had cleared the sky. The time was delicious.

- I do not know anything specific, miss, I replied, but is it impossible to drive ourselves our investigation, as well as would the old Ganimard, the personal enemy of Arsène Lupin?

- Oh oh! you advance much!

- In what? Is the problem so complicated?

- Very complicated.

- You forget the elements that we have to solve it.

- What elements?

- 1: Lupin calls himself Monsieur R ...

- Signalement somewhat vague.

- 2: He travels alone.

- If you only have this detail!

- 3: He is blond.

- And so?

- So we have only to consult the list of passengers and proceed by elimination.

I had that list in my pocket. I took it and searched.

- I first notes that there are only thirteen people that their initial refers to our attention.

- Thirteen only?

- In first class, yes. Of these thirteen R ... gentlemen, as you can make sure, nine are accompanied by women, children or servants. Remain isolated four characters: Marquis de Raverdan ...

- Secretary of Embassy interrupted Miss Nelly, I know him.

- Major Rawson ...

- It's my uncle, someone said.

- M. Rivolta ...

- Present, cried one of us, an Italian, whose face was hidden beneath a beard of the finest black.

Miss Nelly laughed.

- Monsieur is not exactly blond.

- So, I replied, we are forced to conclude that the culprit is the last in the list.

- Meaning?

- That is to say, Mr. Rozaine. Does anyone know Mr. Rozaine?

It was silent. But Miss Nelly, challenging the taciturn young man whose attentions to her tormented me, said:

- Well, Monsieur Rozaine, you do not answer?

The eyes turned to him. He was blond.

Let's face it, I felt like a little shock in my heart. And the awkward silence that hung over us told me that the other assistants also experienced this sort of suffocation. It was absurd also because finally nothing in the manners of this gentleman did not allow to suspect him.

- Why I do not answer? he says, it's because, given my name, my quality of solitary traveler and the color of my hair, I have already conducted a similar investigation, and I got the same result. I am therefore conducted to the opinion that I will be arrested.

He had a funny look, pronouncing these words. His thin lips like two inflexible traits thinned and paled more. Blood nets striated his eyes.

Of course, he joked. Yet his face, his attitude, impressed us. Naively, Miss Nelly asked:

- But you do not have a injury?

- It is true, he said, the wound is missing.

With a nervous gesture he raised his cuff and uncovered his arm. But once an idea struck me. My eyes met Miss Nelly: he showed the left arm.

And I would definitely make the remark when an incident diverted our attention. Lady Jerland, Miss Nelly's friend, came running.

She was upset. We hurried around her, and it was only after much effort she managed to stammer:

- My jewelry, my pearls! ... Someone took everything! ...

No, he had not taken everything, as we knew thereafter; more curious thing: he had chosen!

From the diamond star, pendant in cabochon rubies, broken necklaces and bracelets, he took not the larger stones but the finest, most precious pieces, the ones that had the most value while taking the less space. The frames were lying there on the table. I saw them, all we saw them, stripped of their gems like flowers which one would have torn the beautiful sparkling colored petals.

And to perform this work, he took it during the tea time of lady Jerland, he had taken it in broad daylight and in a busy hallway, break the door of the cabin, found a small bag concealed deliberately in bottom of a hat box, open it and choose!

There was a cry among us. There was one opinion among all passengers as the theft was known: it is Arsène Lupin. And indeed, it was his complicated, mysterious, incomprehensible and logical way same time, because, as it was difficult to conceal the cumbersome mass formed by all jewelry, much easier was with small things independent of each other, pearls, emeralds and sapphires.

And during the dinner, it happened this: right and left Rozaine, the two seats remained empty. And in the evening it became known that he had been summoned by the commander.

His arrest, no one doubted, caused a relief. We finally breathed. That night we played games. We danced. Miss Nelly, especially, showed a stunning gaiety that showed me that if she accepted at first the honor of Rozaine, she did not remember. His grace finished

conquer me. Around midnight, in the serene moonlight, I assured her my devotion with an emotion that does not seem to displease her.

But the next day, to general astonishment, it was learned that the charges against him were not enough, Rozaine was free.

The son of a great Bordeaux merchant, he had exhibited some papers in perfect order. In addition, his arms did not provide any sign of injury.

- Papers! birth certificates! exclaimed the enemies of Rozaine, but Arsène Lupin will furnish you all you want! As for the injury, is that it has not received ... or he has erased the traces!

It was objected to them that the time of theft, it was demonstrated, Rozaine walked on deck. They retaliated:

- Is that a man like Arsène Lupin needs to attend the theft he commits?

And then, without any foreign consideration, there was a point on which most skeptical could not fussing: Who, except Rozaine, traveling alone, was blond and had a name starting with R? Which one designated the telegram, if it were not Rozaine?

And when Rozaine, minutes before lunch, walked boldly toward our group, Miss Nelly and Lady Jerland got up and went away.

It was indeed the fear.

An hour later, a circular manuscript was passed from hand to hand among the employees of the board, the sailors, travelers of all classes: Louis Rozaine promised a sum of ten thousand francs to which would unmask Arsène Lupin, or find the holder of the stolen stones.

- And if no one helps me against this bandit, Rozaine said to the commander, I will do it myself.

Rozaine against Arsène Lupin, or rather, in other words, Arsène Lupin himself against Arsène Lupin, the fight was not without interest!

It lasted for two days. Rozaine was seen wander right and left, mingling with staff, query, browse. His shadow was seen, at night, prowling.

For his part, the commander deployed the most active energy. From top to bottom, in every corner, *Provence* was searched. They raided in all cabins, without exception, on the very correct pretext that the objects were hidden in any place except in the cab of the guilty.

- We will eventually discover something, isn't it? asked me Miss Nelly. Even if with all sorcerers, he can not make diamonds and pearls become invisible.

- Yes, I answered, or otherwise he would need to explore the lining of our hats, the lining of our jackets, and everything that we carry on us.

And showing him my kodak a 9 x 12 with which I never tired to photograph in the most diverse attitudes:

- Even in a device no bigger than this one, don't you think there would be room for all gemstones of Lady Jerland. It will be assigned to take pictures and that's it.

- But yet I have heard that every thief leaves behind him some indication.

- There's one: Arsène Lupin.

- How that?

- How that? because he did not think to the theft he commits only, but to all circumstances that could terminate him.

- At the beginning, you were more confident.

- But, since I saw him in action.

- And then, according to you?

- According to me, we lose time.

In fact, the investigation did not give any result, or at least one it gave did not correspond to the overall effort: the watch of the commander was stolen from him.

Furious, he redoubled ardor and watched even more closely Rozaine with whom he had had several interviews. The next day, charming irony, we found the watch among the collars of the second commander.

All this was a miracle of air, and many denounced the humorous way of Arsène Lupin, burglar, yes, but also dilettante. He worked by taste and vocation, certainly, but also for fun. He gave the impression of a gentleman entertaining the piece he plays, and who, behind the scenes, laughs uproariously deploying its traits of mind and situations he imagined.

Definitely, he was an artist of its kind, and when I watched Rozaine, dark and stubborn, and I thought of the dual role that probably kept this curious character, I could not talk without a certain admiration.

But the night before last night, the watch officer heard groans in the darkest place of the bridge. He approached. A man was lying, his head wrapped in a thick gray scarf, wrists tied with a thin cord.

We untied him from his bonds. We raised him, and take care of him.

This man was Rozaine.

It was Rozaine attacked during one of his expeditions, felled and stripped. A business card with a pin attached to his clothes displays these words: "Arsène Lupin accepts with gratitude the ten thousand francs of Mr Rozaine."

In fact, the stolen wallet contained twenty thousand francs.

Naturally, the unfortunate was accused of having simulated this attack against itself. But besides that it would have been impossible to bind in this way, it was established that the writing on the card differed absolutely from the writing of Rozaine, but resembled, the contrary, to that of Arsène Lupin such as reproduced in an old newspaper found on board.

So Rozaine was no longer Arsène Lupin. Rozaine was Rozaine, the son of a Bordeaux merchant! And the presence of Arsène Lupin was affirmed once again, and by what terrible deed!

It was terror. We dared no more to stay alone in the cabin and also not to venture alone too wide locations. Cautiously we grouped among people safe from each other. And again, an instinctive mistrust divided the most intimates. Like the threat did not come from a single individual, monitored, and thus less dangerous. Arsène Lupin, now it was ... it was everyone. Our excited imagination attributed to him miraculous and unlimited power. We supposed him able to take the most unexpected disguises, to be in turn the respectable Major Rawson or the noble Marquis of Raverdan, or even, because we no longer stop at the original accuser, to this or such person known to all, being a wife, children, or servant.

The first wireless messages brought no news. At least the commander didn't share to us, and such silence was not reassuring us.

Also, the last day seemed endless. We lived in the anxious wait of a misfortune. This time it would not be a theft, it would not be a simple aggression, it would be crime, murder. We did not admit that Arsène Lupin would stop in these two insignificant thefts. Absolute master of the ship, the authorities reduced to impotence, he had only to will, everything was allowed, properties and lives were at his disposal.

Delightful hours for me, I admit, because this way I earned Miss Nelly's confidence. Impressed by so many events, nature already worried, she spontaneously sought protection at my side, safety I was happy to offer her.

Basically, I blessed Arsène Lupin. Was it not he who approached us? Was it not thanks to him that I had the right to abandon me to the most beautiful dreams? Dreams of love and less chimerical dreams, why not confess it? The Andrezy are nobles, but their image is somewhat tarnished, and it does not seem unworthy for a gentleman to consider giving to his name the lost luster.

And these dreams, I felt, not offended point Nelly. Her smiling eyes authorized me to act this way. The sweetness of her voice told me to hope.

And until the last moment, leaning on railings, we sat near each other, while the line the US coast sailed out in front of us.

The searches were interrupted. We waited. From the top to the steerage where emigrants were swarming, we expected the supreme minute to finally explain the insoluble enigma. Who was Arsène Lupin? Under what name, under what mask hid the famous Arsène Lupin?

And that supreme moment arrived. Even if I live a hundred years, I will not forget the smallest detail.

- How pale you are, Miss Nelly, I said to my companion who was leaning on my arm, almost fainting.

- And you! she replied, ah! you are so changed!

- Just think! this minute is exciting, and I am so happy to live with you, Miss Nelly. It seems that your memory is sometimes linger ...

She was not listening, panting and feverish. The bridge fell. But before we had the freedom to cross, people boarded, customs, men in uniform, factors.

Miss Nelly stammered:

- I would not be surprised to see Arsène Lupin escaped during the voyage.

- He may have preferred death to dishonor, and dive into the Atlantic rather than be arrested.

- Do not laugh, she said, annoyed.

Suddenly I was startled, and as she questioned me, I told him:

- Do you see this little old man standing at the end of the bridge?

- With an umbrella and an olive-green coat?

- He is Ganimard.

- Ganimard?

- Yes, the famous detective, who has vowed Arsène Lupin would be arrested by his own hand. Ah! I understand that we did not have information on this side of the ocean. Ganimard was there! and he likes that no one cares for her small business.

- So Arsène Lupin will be arrested for sure?

- Who knows? Ganimard has never seen him, it seems, only made-up and dressed. Unless he know his actual name ...

- Ah! she said, with that curiosity a little cruel of the woman, if I could attend arrest!

- Patience. Certainly Arsène Lupin has already noticed the presence of his enemy. He would rather go out among the last, when the eye of the old man will be tired.

The landing began. Leaning on his umbrella, with an indifferent air, Ganimard did not seem to pay attention to the crowd that pressed between two railings. I noticed that an officer of the board posted behind him, advising him from time to time.

Marquis de Raverdan, Major Rawson, the Italian Rivolta, marched, and others, and many others ... And I saw Rozaine approaching.

Poor Rozaine! he did not seem recovered from his misadventures!

- Maybe it is him anyway, said Miss Nelly ... What do you think?

- I think it would be very interesting to have Ganimard and on the same Rozaine photography. So take my camera, I am so loaded.

I gave her, but too late for her to use it. Rozaine arrived. The officer bent on the ear of Ganimard, this one shrugged slightly and Rozaine passed.

But then, my God, who was Arsène Lupin?

- Yes, she said out loud, who is it?

There were less than twenty people. She watched them alternately, with the confused fear that he will be within those twenty people.

I tell him:

-We can not wait any longer.

She advanced. I followed her. But we had not taken ten steps when Ganimard barred our way.

- Well, what? I cried.

- One moment, sir, there is no hurry.

- I accompany miss.

- One moment, he repeated in a more commanding voice.

He looked at me deeply, then said, staring into the eyes:

- Arsène Lupin, isn't it?

I began to laugh.

- No, Bernard Andrezy, simply.

- Bernard Of Andrezy died three years ago in Macedonia.

- If Andrezy Bernard was dead, I would not be of this world. And this is not the case. Here are my papers.

- These are his papers. How that you have it, that's what I will be pleased to explain.

- But you are crazy! Arsène Lupin embarked under the name R.

- Yes, one more of your tricks, a false track on which you started them there. Ah! you're a pretty strength, my lad. But this time luck has turned. Come, Lupin, play fair.

I hesitated for a second. With a sharp blow, he struck me on the right forearm. I let out a cry of pain. He knocked on the poorly closed wound reported in the telegram.

Well, I had to resign. I turned to Miss Nelly. She listened, pale, staggering.

His gaze met mine, and sank on the Kodak that I had given her. She made an abrupt gesture, and I felt, I was certain she understood suddenly. Yes, it was there, between the narrow walls of black shagreen, the hollow of the small object that I had taken the precaution to place in her hands before Ganimard arrest me, it was there that I laid the twenty thousand francs of Rozaine, and the pearls and diamonds of Lady Jerland.

Ah! I swear, at this solemn moment, when Ganimard and two of his acolytes around me, everything was indifferent to me, my arrest, the hostility of the people, everything except this: the decision that was going to take Miss Nelly of what I had told her.

That they had against me this material and conclusive proof, I did not even think of dread, but this evidence, will Miss Nelly decide to provide?

Would I be betrayed by her? lost for her? She would act as an enemy who does not forgive, or as a woman who remembers and whose scorn is softened by a little indulgence, a little involuntary sympathy?

She walked before me, I bowed her very low, without a word. Together with the other travelers, she walked to the bridge, my Kodak in her hand.

No doubt, I thought, she did not dare, in public. It's in an hour, in a moment, she will.

But, arriving in the middle of the bridge, by a movement of simulated awkwardness, she let it fall into the water between the quay wall and the ship's side.

Then I saw her walking away.

His nice figure was lost in the crowd, appeared to me again and disappeared. It was over, over for ever.

For a moment I stood there, sad at a time and penetrated by a mild tenderness, then I sighed, to the astonishment of Ganimard:

- Pity, anyway, not to be an honest man ...

This is the story of his arrest Arsène Lupin told me a winter evening. The chance of the incidents for which I will write some day the story had tied us with links ... shall I say of friendship? Yes, I trust Arsène Lupin honors me with some friendship, and that it is by friendship that he comes sometimes to my house unannounced, bringing, in the silence of my working cabinet, his youthful gaiety, the radiance of his ardent life, his beautiful mood for which the destiny has only favors and smiles.

His portrait? How could I do it? Twenty times I saw Arsène Lupin, and twenty times it is a different being who appeared to me ... or rather the same being which twenty mirrors sending to me so many distorted images, each with its special eyes, its special shape figure, his own gesture, her figure and character.

- I myself, he told me, I do not know who I am. In a mirror I no longer recognize myself.

A joke, certainly, and a paradox, but truth against those who meet him and ignore his infinite resources, his patience, his art of makeup, his prodigious ability to transform up to the proportions of his face, and altering even the report of his traits between them.

- Why, he said again, would I have a defined appearance? Why not avoid the danger of always being the same personality? My actions define me enough.

And he details with an advanced pride:

- So much the better if we can never say with certainty, Here it is Arsène Lupin. The key is to tell without fear of error: Arsène Lupin did that.

These are some of these acts, some of these adventures I'm trying to reconstitute, according to the confidences he had the good grace to favor me, some winter evenings, in the silence of my working cabinet ...

.....

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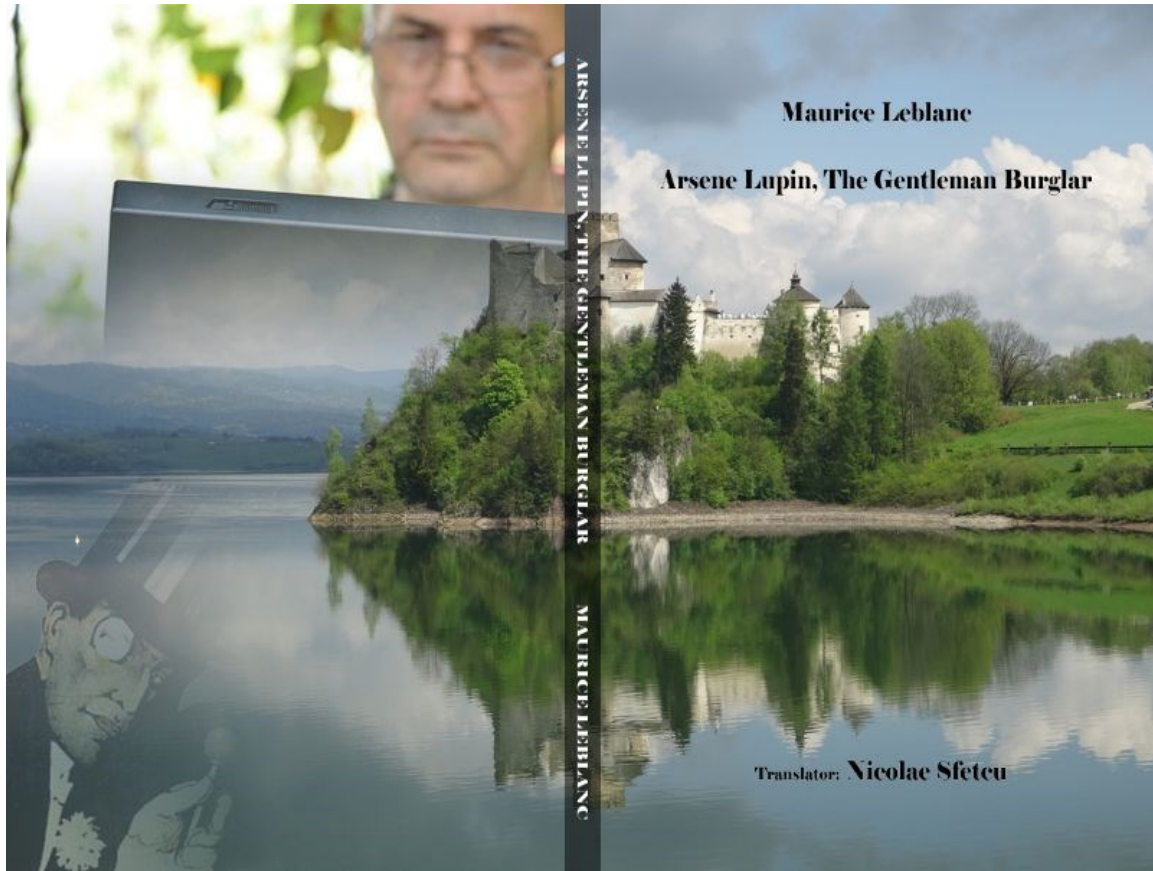
Book

By Maurice Leblanc; translator and editor: Nicolae Sfetcu

Arsene Lupin, The Gentleman Burglar is a collection of nine stories, written by Maurice Leblanc, who constitute the first adventures of Arsene Lupin. The color cover of the original edition is designed by Henri Goussé.

The first story in the collection, *The Arrest of Arsene Lupin*, was published in July 1905 in the newspaper *Je sais tout*. This is the first story implementing Arsène Lupin. It has a real success, Maurice Leblanc is encouraged to write the sequel by his editor. Or, as the author is perplexed on how to continue the adventures of a hero who has been locked up, the publisher ordered to him to escape. The saga of the gentleman thief was born. Several

new appeared in *Je sais tout*, at irregular intervals, until 1907, before being grouped in volume.



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